(c) if not, whether Government propose to take stern action against these airlines;

(d) the total amount collected as on 15th February, 2007 by each airlines on account of this surcharge, airline-wise; and

(e) whether private airlines are also charging passenger surcharge on sectors where air congestion does not exist and if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) DGCA has asked all scheduled airlines to withdraw the congestion surcharge.

(b) The airlines have been given a week's time (upto 21.3.2007) to respond.

(c) Domestic air fares are not regulated by the Government after the repeal of Air Corporation Act 1953. Domestic Airlines are free to charge air fares in their commercial judgement.

(d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(e) Private Scheduled airline are charging Air Congestion Surcharge on their entire network.

Construction of airport in Sikkim

2278. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any comprehensive scheme and programme for construction of airport in Sikkim;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of financial assistance granted to Sikkim for development and construction of airport during the year, 2006-07 in Sikkim; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor and by when the above airport is likely to be constructed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The cost of the proposed Greenfield airport at Pekyong, Sikkim has been estimated at Rs. 340 crore. However, the funding pattern of the project has not yet been finalised.

(c) and (d) Rs. 25 Crores has been provided during 2006-07. The work on the construction of the airport will be started by Airports Authority of India once the pattern of funding has been firmed up.

Grant of licences to Pilots

2279. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Directorate General of Civil Aviation expects a shortage of 500 pilots every year against the availability of only 200 trained pilots;

(b) whether to overcome the pilot shortage, the DGCA has proposed to grant licence to about 250 foreign pilots early this year;

(c) whether as a measure to ease pilot shortage, DGCA is likely to introduce Multi-engine Pilot Licencing in India; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) With the present growth of aviation it is expected that shortage of around 500 pilots would be there every year. Presently, there are 3000 type rated pilots in India.

(b) Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) does not suo moto grant or validate the Commercial Pilot Licences of foreign pilots. However, if airlines wish to deploy the foreign pilots/instructors, such applications are considered by DGCA for validation of their licences subject to fulfillment of the prescribed conditions. There are approximately 565 foreign pilots in the country working with various airlines.

(c) and (d) Multi engine pilot licenses are already in vogue in India.